

Moravian Church
Friedensfeld
St. Croix
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-57

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MORAVIAN CHURCH

HABS No. VI-57

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Location: ~~Friedensfeld~~ Friedensfeld, St. Croix, Virgin Islands

Wood frame on coursed limestone foundation.
Rectangular with a projecting center section
at both short ends of building. A small square
steeple rises the west gable end.

GENERAL STATEMENT

Architectural Character

The original design is practically intact. A few recent repairs to the building have obliterated details as window trim, casings in limited and well defined areas, but in general the structure still exhibits its original detailing.

The building is not only one of the larger churches in the Virgin Islands, is also unique for the relative excellence of its detailing and for its unusual interior design. Stylistically, it has a combination of Gothic and Classical Revival elements executed with a heavy reliance on traditional use of materials and craftsmanship.

Condition of Fabric

The building is structurally in poor condition. Finishes are fair only and the church is not well maintained.

EXTERIOR

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Orientation:

The long axis of the building runs east-west. The main entrance is to the west.

Foundations:

The foundation is cut & coursed sandstone blocks laid in a lime mortar. It is raised from 2' to 3'-9" above the ground level. The lower section of the exposed foundation wall is 4" wider than the upper section.

The building has open masonry drain on all sides with masonry splash-blocks at inner angles of the center nave projections on the west and east sides of the church. Both drains and splashblocks are constructed in the same materials as the foundations and as part of them.

Wall Construction:

Wood frame construction sheathed and clapboarded. On the west side the corner boards have been grooved to simulate quoins. The walls rise from a wood drip board or water table projecting 2" over the foundations. The church is 7 bays long by 5 bays wide. On the west side the full two stories of the center 3 bays project out one additional bay. On the east side the lower story only of the center three bays project out one bay. All exterior woodwork is painted white.

Openings - Doorways & Doors:

The church has 4 entrances. The main one is in the center bay of the west gable end, two other entrances to the nave of the church are placed in the center bays of the long sides. The fourth entrance is on the north side of the sacristy.

The three entrances to the church are identical. They are reached by a half pyramid of cut limestone steps. The doorway has a flat head with an entablature moulding reminiscent of Tuscan precedents. It is further emphasized by providing the window above the doorways with a sill moulding the full width of the doorway and by two narrow panels trimmed with mouldings flanking the usual window casings. The doorways have double exterior shutters with vertical planking on the outer face and with a simulated 5-panel interior produced by moulded styles and rails. The top, bottom and center panel are half the width of the 2nd and 4th panel. The double interior doors are shorter than the exterior

ones and the transom above them is filled with fixed louvres. The interior doors have three sections with movable louvres in the upper two and a solid panel in the lower section.

Windows & Shutters:

The first floor windows are flatheaded with a slightly projected drip cap and a moulded sill board. The 2nd floor windows have pointed arched heads without drip caps or sill boards.

The windows of the 1st and 2nd floors are of the same width and placed immediately above each other. The space between the head and the sill of the 1st and 2nd story windows has flush vertical boarding.

The window casing of the 1st floor continues into the casing of windows of the 2nd floor producing an effect, when the shutters are closed, of one tall window interrupted only by the drip cap of the 1st floor window opening.

All windows have shutters of the same construction as the stormdoors.

The interior side of the shutters have 3 panels. The 1st floor windows have interior 2-panel jalousie shutters with movable louvres. The 2nd floor windows have interior glazed pointed casement windows with six rectangular panes and six smaller odd shaped panes fitted to the arch of the window in each wing of the casement. The 2nd story windows of the 3 center bays in the east end of the church have fixed glazed sash.

Roof Shape:

The church is roofed by three parallel gable roofs with two internal valleys. The ridges and the valleys run east-west. The roofing is corrugated metal on wood sheathing supported on trusses.

The one story sacristy has a gable roof.

Cornices:

The church has a continuous horizontal cornice on all sides. At gable ends the eaves are supported by cornices of the same profile as the main cornice forming pedimented gables. The eaves extend only 3" out beyond the cornice.

There are no dormers, chimneys, porches or stops.

Steeple:

The church has a steeple or rider over the projecting center gable of the west side. It is an open four-sided pavilion with semi-circular arches supporting a double slope concave pyramid roof covered in sheet metal and crowned by a wrought-iron weathervane with two ornamental balls. The rider contains the church bell. A simple spool balustrade fills the lower section of the arches of the pavilion.

INTERIOR

Floor Plan:

The projecting center section of the west side of the church contains a vestibule and two staircases leading to the balcony. A double set of doors provide access from the vestibule to the rectangular church room that occupies the entire main section of the building. It goes up through both stories and has a balcony 1 bay wide along the south, west and east sides supported on square wood columns. The columns continue up through the second story and are the internal supports of the roof trusses, and in effect they divide the church into a nave and two side aisles.

The east end of the church room has a raised platform with a lectern and table. A pulpit raised approximately 6' is set in the wall behind it. Flanking double doors provide access to the sacristy. The pulpit is entered by a stair from the sacristy.

Staircases:

The two staircases to the balcony in the vestibule are located immediately to the left and right of the main entrance. They are constructed in wood and follow the angle of the walls. They have open balustrades with square-sectioned banisters and mahogany handrail that spirals into a rounded newel post. The exposed stringers have a double scroll design. The space below the staircases is boxed in and serves as closets. The staircase in the sacristy is a straight-run stair of similar design.

Floor:

The floor throughout is tongue-and-groove pine boarding. On the side balconies it is stepped in 4 tiers.

Wall and Ceiling Finishes:

Walls are flush vertical sheathing painted light gray. The ceiling under the balconies is wood boarding with exposed beams. The vestibule and the areas above the balcony have a furred board ceiling. In the central section of the church or nave the sheathing and trusses are exposed and painted black. Below it is a segmental barrel vault constructed of an open squared grid in moulded wood members. The grid is painted white and provides the effects of coffered ceiling. The contrast in light value between the grid and the trusses above it is sufficient to make the trusses indistinguishable.

Doorways & Doors:

All interior doors are double with three sections for each leaf. The two upper sections have movable louvres painted a dark green and a solid panel in the lower section. Except for the louvres the doors are painted white.

Trim:

All doorways and windows have moulded casings. Windows also have

projecting sill with moulded continuous brackets below them. All rooms have moulded baseboards throughout. Ceilings have narrow cover moldings at intersection with walls. Where the beams are exposed the cover moldings are mitered around the beams.

The columns have base and capital moldings. At intersection with beams and purlins are brackets decorated with shallow scroll work. The 1st floor column extends from floor to underside of balcony. The 2nd floor columns from the top of the balcony rail to the encased beam that supports the plate. The vertical lines of the columns are continued on the face of the balcony by a slightly projecting pilaster.

Balcony Rail:

The balcony/^{rail}consists of a panelled wood lower section crowned by a row of wrought-iron pointed arches supporting a wood handrail. The lower part, which also acts as a spandrel in the balcony construction, has 4 panels for each column spacing. It has an elaborate crown moulding mitered around the projected pilaster that forms the visual continuation between the 1st and 2nd floor columns.

Hardware:

The hardware is of wrought iron. The shutters are equipped with small head and sill hooks, 2 larger storm hooks, 4 strap hinges and bar brackets. The windows and jalousies have L hinges and eye hooks. The exterior storm doors have 6 strap hinges, 2 hooks, sliding surface bolts and box locks. The interior doors have L or H hinges, box locks, 2 small wall hooks and in some cases vertical sliding surface bolts on the swinging leaf of the door.

Lighting:

The church is wired for electricity and has a series of bracket fixtures on the east wall and along the balcony rail. The fixtures on the east wall appear originally to have been intended for keroene lamps.

They have stamped metal brackets and blown glass shades. The ceiling has three rosettes and hooks for candelabrae.

Heating:

There is no heating plant.

OTHER

General Setting:

The church is situated on the top of a slight rise. To the north and east are the Mission House, School House, stables and other auxiliary buildings of the Moravian Mission. A small cemetery is located to the south of the church. Immediately to the west of the church are two large cisterns partially above ground. They are connected by gutters to the leaders from the church roof.

Walks:

Paved walks lead from the roadway in front of the church along both sides of the building to the sacristy in the rear and to the side entrances.

Landscaping:

Although there are traces of landscaping around the church, the entire area has been neglected for so many years that the original planting pattern cannot be discerned.

Prepared by F. C. Gjeesing, NPS,

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